

# Care for the Common Good

## COVID-19 Vaccine

### Equity in Access



Trinity Health is one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation, serving diverse communities that include more than 30 million people across 22 states. We advocate for public policies that advance the common good including expanding health care coverage and care, investing in public health, paying for high-value care, and improving the health of communities.

### National Approach Needed to Advance the Common Good

Trinity Health believes the overarching goal of COVID-19 vaccine policy decision making should be to save lives and reduce transmission. Vaccine policy should be led by the federal government and include a coordinated, data-driven national response to distribution and allocation that prioritizes populations and recipients who are at highest risk. A national framework with consistent application across states is necessary to achieve equity and fairness in allocation of a COVID-19 vaccine within a phased roll out. States and regions can then decide how best to distribute the vaccine at the community level within this framework in a fully transparent manner.

Trinity Health has a longstanding commitment to addressing health and social issues within communities, including promoting equitable access to vaccinations. A strong vaccine distribution infrastructure requires coordination and cooperation across government, public health, health care providers, community-based partners and others. Trinity Health believes that broad acceptance of a safe vaccine is critical to the nation's health and COVID-19 response. This work is guided by the following principles.

### Promote Trust Between the Public and the Health System

Create public enthusiasm for highly effective vaccines and promote public trust by providing culturally appropriate education across all populations. This requires:

- Data and results from the vaccine trials and ongoing safety monitoring to be shared transparently with stakeholders to further instill confidence in vaccine safety and efficacy.
- Public information and guidelines disseminated by federal, state and local governments to be consistent and data driven.
- Funding for community collaboratives that bring together residents, government, social services, health care, community-based organizations and other stakeholders to identify, develop and implement vaccination distribution plans and strategies, including encouraging public comment.
- Creation of culturally competent, multi-language materials and strategic distribution thereof to ensure educational information is accessible to all communities.

### Ensure Equity in Vaccine Access

COVID-19 infection and hospitalization rates have disproportionately impacted communities of color. In order to ensure equitable access, policies should:

- Guarantee vaccine is provided and administered with no out-of-pocket costs for those being vaccinated.
- Encourage strong partnerships across health systems, community-based organizations, government, public health departments and other stakeholders with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Fund, expand and promote community-based sites for immunization (e.g. school-based health centers, mobile clinics, drive-thru and walk-up vaccination options) to ensure ease and visible access in all communities.

### Distrust and Disparities Influence Vaccination Rates<sup>1</sup>

- Recent surveys show that 62 percent of Americans are likely to get a COVID-19 vaccine, up from a low of 54 percent in October 2020.
- 60 percent of women, 56 percent of Black people and 54 percent of Gen Z/Millennials say they are likely to get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- During the 2019-20 season, influenza vaccination rates were higher in non-Hispanic whites than in all other racial and ethnic groups, with 54.8 percent of white people, 45.7 percent of Black people and 46.6 percent of Hispanics receiving the vaccine.

<sup>1</sup>Sources: Harris Poll COVID19 Tracker Wave 45, fielded Dec 28-30, 2020; "Flu Vaccination Coverage, United States, 2019–20 Influenza Season," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), October 1, 2020.

# Equitable Access to a COVID-19 Vaccine

- Further advance value-based payment models that embed community health workers in care teams that provide education, care coordination, and home-based supports.
- Require robust data collection and public reporting of vaccine access that includes race/ethnicity through a vaccine registry that includes both children and adult populations.
- Ensure vaccine reporting requirements are clear and consistent across states and the federal government.
- Grant vaccine access to all people – including immigrants, refugees and other asylum seekers – regardless of immigration status.
- Include specific guidance on data protection and the assurance that vaccine distribution sites will be considered sensitive locations protected from immigration enforcement actions.
- Ensure access for vulnerable communities globally, not just within the United States and its territories.

## Support Transparent, Efficient Vaccine Distribution

Vaccinating communities around the country requires coordination and collaboration across stakeholders. Policies should:

- Ensure strong two-way communication between government and providers with timely access to information about vaccine availability, distribution, vaccinating providers and quantities.
- Remove barriers that slow the vaccination process, for example, on appointment scheduling.
- Provide financial support to providers, state and local governments and public health for vaccine distribution and administration.
- Address supply chain issues, including access to testing supplies and other major challenges that will be exacerbated by the production and distribution of vaccines.
- Consider using active-duty troops to support the effort to assist with mitigating the risk that deployment of National Guard/Reserve troops could take front line workers out of hospitals.

## Trinity Health is Committed to Vaccinating our Communities

- Administered approximately 1 percent of all COVID-19 vaccinations nationwide, including vaccinating 60 percent of employees through January 2021.
- Investing \$1 million in grants for vulnerable communities and communities of color to support vaccination efforts.
- Developing communications campaign to raise awareness and educate the public about COVID-19 vaccines.

## Invest in a Robust Public Health Infrastructure

Insufficient investment in public health undermines efforts to prepare for, monitor and respond to outbreaks of communicable diseases like COVID-19. Policies to build and strengthen the nation's public health infrastructure should:

- Ensure all public health departments can perform core public health functions such as monitoring health status within a community, diagnosing and investigating health problems, performing outreach and education, developing policies and plans to support community health, enforcing laws and regulations, connecting people to necessary health services, assuring a strong health care workforce, and conducting evaluation and research.
- Prioritize and accelerate efforts for consistent and nationwide public health data collection, exchange and sharing with a uniform data set.

## Conduct Ethical and Safe Vaccine Trials

All vaccines should undergo rigorous testing to certify any approved vaccine is safe and effective. This includes policies that ensure:

- Trials inclusive of diverse populations that reflect the nation's racial composition.
- Policy decisions that are consistent with approved study protocols and best-known science.
- Federal support for ongoing research to understand head-to-head efficacy, duration of immunity and need for future booster vaccination.

### Mission

We, Trinity Health, serve together in the spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

### Core Values

Reverence • Commitment to Those Who Are Poor • Safety • Justice • Stewardship • Integrity